

Ticket to Work/Work Incentives Improvement Act
Medicaid Infrastructure Grant
Advisory Group

Meeting Minutes
March 13, 2003

Members in Attendance:

Nina Davenport, National Multiple Sclerosis Society/Las Vegas Office
Tracy DuPree, Nevada State Welfare Division
Robert "Red" Foster, General Public
Terry Hardy, General Public
Bill Heavilin, Nevada Disability Advocacy & Law Center
Paul Gowins, Northern Nevada Center for Independent Living
Robin Renshaw, Nevada Parents Encouraging Parents
Robert Simola, Ormsby Association for Retarded Citizens
Alyce Thomas, Southern Nevada Adult Mental Health Services
Kimberli Varé, The Skill Builders of Nevada
Gillian Wells, Nevada Parents Encouraging Parents

Members Not in Attendance:

Lisa Erquiaga, Northern Nevada Center for Independent Living/Fallon Office

Staff:

John Alexander, Program Manager
Linda James, Rural Program Specialist

Others Present:

Kitti Barth, Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities
Bonnie Dixon, Nevada Disability Advocacy & Law Center
Shirley Hardy, General Public
Kent Hill, General Public
Lisa Stingley, General Public
Loretta Wilson, General Public

I. Roll Call – Housekeeping:

John Alexander began the meeting by calling roll. It was determined that a quorum was present.

II. February Meeting Minutes Approval:

Bob Simola asked the group for any changes or corrections to the minutes. Alyce Thomas reported that the February minutes incorrectly stated she had been in the hospital for 47 days. Ms. Thomas stated that the minutes should read she "was ill for 47

days with two hospitalizations during that time frame”. Tracy DuPree proposed a motion for the minutes to be accepted with Ms. Thomas’ corrections. Nina Davenport seconded the motion. **The motion carried unanimously.**

III. Staff Projects Status Update:

a. Section 1619 Outreach

John Alexander gave an update on the 1619 consumer letters. The letters have been mailed to approximately 14,000 adult SSI/Medicaid recipients in Nevada. The letters ask whether they are interested in training on the 1619 work incentive and if so to select the days and times training would be convenient. The questionnaire will also gather information to help us determine the demands in terms of location. They went out on March 3, 2003. At this time we do not have the exact count of responses. We have received phone calls from people needing some clarification. Mary Jackson has developed the database for storing and analysis of this data. Also in that mailing was the 1619 consumer brochures that all of you have seen and looked at several times.

The other part of this outreach was the mailing of the 1619 poster and brochures to service providers. The mailing is approximately 75% complete. Advisory members discussed agencies that have posters on display. Gillian Wells requested posters be provided to Bill Hamilton with Vocational Rehabilitation Services. John Alexander informed the group that the Spanish versions of the brochures will be exhausted after the initial orders are completed.

b. “Ticket Team” brochure for Consumers – Development Update

Linda James informed the Advisory group that due to other priorities Anita Puentes, who has volunteered to develop the brochure, has not completed the draft. It should be available at the next meeting.

c. “Partners for Profits” Conference

John Alexander shared with the group that at the Baltimore Conference he had secured business cards of three potential speakers. This information will be shared with Kitti Barth and they will be working together to select the speaker for the conference. Plans are to have the conference some time this summer.

Kitti Barth, Governor’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities (GCEPD), informed the group that, because of other priorities, her staff has not worked on the survey. Her agency’s committee has authorized contracting with a training center to organize the event.

d. HIWA Automated Support Development

John Alexander updated the Advisory Group on the automated support for HIWA. Mr. Alexander stated he met yesterday with the automation team. The general system design, the functional requirements portion, which is a type of high level business process, rules and flow charts, is complete and has been submitted to NOMADS programming staff. They will come back with a cost estimate.

The other portion of the automated support is the premium payment subsystem. The functional requirements for the premium payment subsystem were completed yesterday. The programming staff of the Dept. of Information Technology (DoIT) will be estimating the cost of the premium payment subsystem. Mr. Alexander shared his hopes to have a total cost figure on this by the next meeting and will continue to update the group as things occur. There are three alternatives for the development of the premium payment subsystem. First, transfer a system from another state and modify it to fit Nevada's needs. Second, identify vendors, if any, that have an "off the shelf" system that can be purchased and modified. Third, the premium payment subsystem could be developed by DoIT programming staff. Our administration and DoIT's administration will make this decision. Several different considerations are being discussed. One is the cost of each option. Another is the programming support needed after the system is implemented to resolve problems as they occur.

John Alexander told the group the premium table has actually been expanded. He explained that one issue not addressed in the table previously seen by the group was for premiums for eligible persons at the higher income levels. The original chart premiums presented to the advisory group were approximately \$75 to \$92 per month. With the expansion to include those at the higher income levels, there will be premium cost in excess of the \$92 per month. This will be built into the premium table based on Federal Poverty Level (FPL) changes and any changes made at the legislative level. One item the legislature may choose to modify is the advisory group's recommend premium rate of 5% of a person's income. Federal law allows the rate to go as high as 7.5%. Even this is modifiable in the premium table.

Paul Gowins expressed his concern of premiums being used as a cost control mechanism. He asked, "What would we do with people already on the program?" He provided an example of the effect premium changes would have to an individual on a fixed budget who is dependent on the program for health insurance. "You would have someone set up to spend their money based on a \$90 a month premium. And then we start getting too many people on the program and jump the premium up. Now the person already on the program cannot afford it. We need some kind of mechanism in there so we understand if we have to do that people who are paying \$90 would not jump up to \$130 and no longer be able to afford the program." Cochair, Bob Simola, asked whether participants could be grandfathered into the program. John Alexander informed the group that, if the Legislature chooses to fund the HIWA program, the Division of Health Care Financing and Policy (DHCFP) is still required by law to publish rules and regulations for the program and provide a 30-day comment period. This would allow an opportunity for these concerns to be addressed. Paul Gowins stated this was his only concern. He did not want people to get hurt by this process.

Mr. Alexander told the group the plan is to get the development and computer support work done for HIWA by the end of the calendar year. The reason for this is the federal government has indicated it may not be open to the idea of allowing grant funds to be carried forward to the next year as we have done the last two previous years. The money we have carried forward the last two years has been banked in anticipation of the automated support modification that is necessary. We have a sizable amount of funds dedicated specifically for the automated support development. The intent is to complete that work with 100% federal funds regardless of if or when the Legislature funds the program and the implementation date. We do have some latitude even if the federal government doesn't allow us to carry some money forward. The funding in the next grant year could be used for any additional work that is necessary to be completed in the automated support development. We will begin to look at carving that out of next year's budget. A big issue and selling point for the Legislature is we are utilizing federal funds to the maximum extent and minimizing the need for state general funds for program development. The implementation and operation of the program does require state general funding and that is why it is part of the governor's budget right now. That is a critical issue, which we all have been talking about for some time.

IV. Legislative Strategy

a. Advisory Group Members' Educational Contacts with Legislators

Nina Davenport presented the group with a written copy of her report of the conference in Baltimore on March 3, 4, & 5, 2003. Mrs. Davenport felt she obtained the most from the session "How to work effectively with the legislature". Her presentation offered insight on the roles of legislators and why individuals should care about the legislative process. The answer is they control the purse strings, establish programs, enact requirements and provide oversight. Budget issues that dominant state legislatures in 2003 and 2004 are similar in many states. Starting with state budget gaps, in 2003 Medicaid and/or health care are over budget in 32 states. "Balanced budget requirements force states to realize" their spending. Twenty-nine states have already made across-the-board cuts. Some states will have to look at tax increases in addition to further cuts. Nevada is not the only state in fiscal trouble. I was surprised to learn we were among many. In discussing working effectively with legislators some good points were made. One point was that in competing for legislative attention disability issues are just another blip on the political screen. Getting their attention is vital. They are looking at a magnitude of issues and concerns as well as competing needs and demands. There is often a lack of awareness and understanding and that's where we come in. It all boils down to getting their attention. Talking to them, it was evident a program that can actually save money always gets their attention. The main speaker in this session, Joanna Dudman, put it in a nut shell. It is really brief. She said, "Contact. Contact. Contact." The majority of legislation is done in the hallway and I think we have been doing that. The only area where we might have done better with the HIWA program that I could see was actually started contacting the legislators even earlier than we did. But we are doing most things right according to what I saw people in other states doing. It seems that our group has had much better staff support than some advisory groups. So thank you John and Linda. One of the main things I came away with was the

feeling of validation for the HIWA program. We seem to be doing a lot of things right. So I think I learned a lot and I did a lot of networking. It was heart warming to know that a lot of the things we have done and the guidance we have had has been the way to go. It was eye opening.

Mr. Alexander passed out a handout from the state of New Hampshire by Clyde Terry, Executive Director of the Granite State Independent Living Foundation. Mr. Terry's presentation dealt with how they worked with their legislators, constituents and various stakeholders resulting in a successful outcome. I thought there may be some new ideas that the group has not already considered in this presentation that might be helpful. Private sector partners such as business and industry associations and individual employers may be something we want to talk about more. Chambers of commerce are an example of business associations. John requested group participation for suggestions and ideas regarding this topic.

Paul Gowins suggested focusing on individuals who are employed or have friends that are employed to ask their boss/business to write letters of support to members of the Assembly Ways and Means committee supporting HIWA.

Kimberli Varé told the group that she has concerns that tickets she has seen state "ticket holders need to contact Vocational Rehabilitation Services" and that a list of employment networks was not mailed out with the tickets. VR is not the only place where tickets can be utilized. Alyce Thomas informed the group that if you call Maximus with your ticket number they will give you VR. Paul Gowins told the group that he thought the reason that was done was because the networks were not fully ready and VR offices are supposed to have a listing of them. There was no central place to distribute information about the networks in all the states so VR offices were chosen. Alyce Thomas stated that when she called the only option given her was VR. Tracy DuPree shared that he received a list of employment networks with his ticket. Paul Gowins suggested the group check with VR and see what their policy is when someone calls them. Gillian Wells agreed to inquire, at the next VR Council Meeting, the policy on answering ticket questions.

Mr. Alexander continued the discussion on making contacts with individual businesses. Bob Simola will be presenting information to the OARC board that is comprised of individual businesses. Mr. Alexander will be accompanying Mr. Simola this coming Monday and extended his support to the other group members as well. Robin Renshaw suggested contacting members of the chambers of commerce. Gillian Wells stated that her agency is a member of the Chamber of Commerce and she would contact them. Red Foster also stated he knew one or two people on the local chamber of commerce. Paul Gowins stated as Director of Northern Nevada Center for Independent Living (NNCIL) he would write a letter from the perspective of employing people. Gillian Wells suggested utilizing Kitti Barth with the Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities to contact employers who already employ people with disabilities. Kitti stated she would put together a letter for her contacts to send to the members of the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means.

Kimberli Varé stated she would have employers and associate board members write letters. Bill Heavilin suggested everyone brain storm who they can contact. He suggested focusing on smaller businesses rather than large corporations. Nina reminded the group of the Multiple Sclerosis fair. The group decided to have letters for

people to sign available at the fair. The group requested the staff to draft a generic letter that they can personalize and send to all the members of the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means. Linda James said she would have the draft to the Cochairs by next Tuesday for approval. Once approved she would e-mail it to all the members. Ms. James suggested the members could add their personal remarks and e-mail it back to her for printing if needed.

Gillian Wells made a motion that the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant staff prepare a letter for the advisory group members to send to each member of the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means. Tracy DuPree seconded the motion. **The motion passed unanimously.**

b. Review of March 12 Legislative Reception

The advisory group thanked Paul Gowins and the other agencies that organized the Legislative Reception. Mr. Gowins stated that everyone RSVP'd except for two individuals. There were 87 people at the reception. He was a little disappointed that they did not have more participation from the legislators. However, overall it was a success in providing an opportunity for networking. Each advisory group member expressed personal feelings in support of the success of the reception.

V. New Business

Gillian Wells informed the group that a concern was brought to her regarding employment networks from the school district. She received some information that school districts are not willing or cooperative in becoming employment networks. What are the benefits or disadvantages of the schools becoming an employment network and if there are benefits, what is the process? Kitti Barth informed the group that she has been talking to the school districts and has received a letter stating they were not interested at this time in becoming an employment network. Each school board decides if this is something they want to pursue.

Paul Gowins informed the group of financial assistance from JJ Johnson, Center for Excellence and Development, to attend the Self Determination Conference in Las Vegas the end of March. He suggested individuals who are interested should contact Mr. Johnson at 775-784-0921, ext. 2351.

John Alexander requested the group submit nominations for the Las Vegas vacancy to him by March 31, 2003. He also requested that any agenda items for the next meeting be submitted by April 4, 2003.

VI. Group Report

a. Gillian Wells – Transition Forum

Gillian Wells updated the group regarding the Transition Forum. The forum met on March 19, 2003 from 12 noon to 2:30 p.m. It was teleconferenced in Carson, Reno and

Las Vegas. She explained the goals of the forum and accomplishments to date in the transition arena. The forum is currently reviewing memorandums of understanding. See Attachment A.

VI. Public Comment Period:

Kitti Barth informed the group that the State Use Program has a new name: Coalition Employing Nevada's Training Services (CENTS). She gave an overview of the mission and makeup of this program. See Attachment B.

Red Foster moved the meeting be adjourned. Tracy DuPree seconded the motion.
Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned.

Attachment A

Gillian Wells' Report

The Transition Forum committee is a sub-committee of the Vocational Rehabilitation Council created to provide consumer and partner input regarding transition services provided by the Department of Employment and Training. It is from the Transition Forum that transition related recommendations are made to both the council and the division.

Attachment B

Kitti Barth's Report

The State Use Program allows government agencies to bypass the competitive bid process and contract directly with community training centers as defined under the Nevada Revised Statutes. These vocational training centers provide work opportunities for the severely developmentally disabled and/or the visually impaired populations. The coordination efforts of this program have been assigned to the Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities (GCEPD). The Governor's committee is creating a "single point of contact" concept as well as marketing to the various governmental levels. This includes state, county and city entities. In addition, the Governor's committee has created a Fair Market Pricing Committee staffed by four government purchasing managers and four community training center executives. This committee's task is to formulate fair market pricing if required to complete a contract.